



Beautiful Sylvan Lake with Turtle Rock in the middle distance and Mother Nature's "bags of wheat" beyond.

Courtesy of U. S. Forest Service

WHAT exquisite bit of rhymed nature study would the poet Byron have penned from a mountain top on the border between South Dakota and Wyoming? He saw and described "cloudless climes and starry skies." He saw the sky that hovers over Venice. He saw many of the earth's wonders; but he never looked upon the scenic gem of the central Northwest, nor the richest hundred miles square in the world, nor the vivid turquoise sky that is the canopy of the Black Hills.

Many of us are Lord Byrons. No, that is too complimentary. Lord Byron never came to America, and he consequently did not have the opportunity to see the Black Hills. What do we do? We go to Europe to see Switzerland and the Alps, and we forget our own. Familiarity does breed contempt. If the Black Hills were in France, they would be a Mecca for American tourists in the Old World.

The man that named them "Black" is no friend of mine; for the hills deserve a name fully as beautiful as they are. Black is gloomy; it connotes mourning and black magic, and that connotes the devil. Blue or red would be better. Of course, the Norway pines are responsible. If they were not so plentiful and so deeply blue-green as to give the effect of near-blackness at a distance, the hills might have had a better name and more glory today. Perhaps the turquoise sky has something to do with it all. Perhaps the peculiar sheen of blue-green accentuates the darkness of the pine-clad elevations. Well, I can't change the sky and I would not even if I could; but to me the Black Hills will ever be an example of unfortunate christening, and I shall ever think of them as the Bonny Hills or something like that.

#### What the Black Hills Hold

IF YOU have not seen the Black Hills, you have not seen your own United States. Certain features of them can be seen elsewhere at one place or another. The Black Hills are a nest of scenic variations, the variety show of the world. The highest peak is only seven thousand feet. There are no Niagaras in the section. But it contains probably the largest gold mine in the world, certainly the largest of those handling low-grade ore. It bosoms exquisite lakes. There are hot springs, trout streams, and caverns larger than Mammoth Cave. The dry, piney air invigorates. The magnificent sky appeals to one's sense of beauty, as do the trees that clothe the hills from head to foot.

In the Black Hills minerals and gems are common. You dislodge a stone as you walk, and where the stone was you find long hexagonal crystals of red, black, or white, or it may be banded. The substance is tourmaline. Farther on you glimpse gold shining from an outcropping. You have visions of a claim and millions. Alas and alack, you either make the discovery and save your equanimity, or you ask somebody and keenly feel your disgrace when he informs you that the scientific name is "iron pyrites" but that everybody knows it as "fool's gold." You then realize that you are a nobody. But you cheer up and walk on and see another shining substance. It proves to be mica. If you are fortunate in finding a big flat piece, you can split it up, cut it into postal size, and write home to the folks. The mica I found was all too small, but I begged some of the proper size from another fellow and scratched on it my homeward message.

You never know what's going to happen next in the

## Land of the Turquoise Sky

By CARL SCHURZ LOWDEN

Black Hills. My host, a mine owner, took me down the shafts and through the mine workings. He took along a gunny bag and a hammer, and me. It was a murderous outfit, and I scarcely knew whether I would get back alive. He chipped off bits of rock here and there. Upon our return we went to his own assaying room. He had selected rich ore; for some hours later he presented me with a button-like bit of gold almost as heavy as a five-dollar piece. Maybe I wasn't a surprised and happy lad with the glittering souvenir.

#### Little Streams Yield Big Trout

LEAF-BEDDED, fern-fringed, gurgling streams are frequently encountered. Brooks that one can hop across contain trout. There is never any need for anybody going hungry. Cut a limb from a birch or aspen, affix a bit of wrapping cord, bend a pin as a substitute for a hook, make your own fly, and go after the trout lurking in the shadows. Do not feel that little streams never yield worthy trout. They do in the Black Hills.

The fishing season for trout extends from the first day of April to the first of November. For bass, pike, pickerel and shad, the season is open the year round with the exception of April. The big hatchery of the government at Spearfish annually releases many thousands of fingerlings to replenish the streams; so there is not much danger of a famine in fish.

The hills are a paradise for the hunter. Of winged game there are partridge, pheasants, plover, ducks and geese. November is the month for the Nimrod after deer. In the least settled parts, those that are still rugged and primitive and scarcely touched by man's hand, one can introduce himself to bears, wolves, coyotes, and wildcats. The big game is steadily increasing in number, this being due to the rigid enforcement of the regulations. The government has no time for game hogs.

The man or woman that loves still, sapphire-blue lakes and boating in the moonlight and music wafted softly over the cool surface of the water, can find surcease from woe and a perfect heart's content on the placid lakes of this wonderland. Boating is exquisite in the daytime with the turquoise blue of the sky reflected where the paddles dip; idyllic it is at night with the stars twinkling from their cloudless dome.

The tourist should not miss Sylvan Lake, a well-named spot indeed. It is a rare gem. I never saw anything entirely matching it. The big white hotel and boathouse squats in a corner. The old turtle, "Turtle Rock," basks in the sunshine about three-fourths of the way across the jeweled water cup. All around Mother Nature has put on a fancy shore line. The columnar rocks, so white and upright, look like sacks of wheat that Mother Nature intended for some grist mill, only here she must have considered herself overburdened and set them down and then forgot them. A children's story could be fashioned around these peculiar formations. If the lake were not so charming, it would be more easily described. No words—nothing—can paint its marvelous magic or entrancing beauty. It is one of

those choice spots that must be seen to be understood, and boated upon before one can know its power of giving rest.

The Sylvan Lake region is rich in interest. The lake itself sits on top of a mountain located midway between Custer and Hill City. To the northeast Harney Peak attains an elevation of 7,240 feet. It is the giant of the Black Hills. Two peaks, Summit and St. Elmo, and Sheep Mountain cluster around the lake but none of them come within a thousand feet of Harney's head. Near the lake are many needle-like rocks, some apertures that might be called Mother Nature's windows, narrow passages between walls of towering granite and a tumbling river with its rock-strewn canyon. Below the timber line are the fragrant pines and some spruce; above the line the mountains prove their age by showing how bald they are.

The Devil's Tower near Sundance, Wyoming, is the most picturesque of all the mountains in the range. The government has, because of its oddity, set it apart as a national monument. It is a mile around at the base and several hundred feet high. It has the appearance of a huge tent made by leaning limestone poles around a circular form. Many years ago an unknown man and woman climbed to its top, though the ascent seems impossible. Uncle Sam (so it is said) plans to build a stairway from the bottom to the top so that the knowledge of the splendor of the view may not be reserved only to the daring man and woman.

#### Freaks in Range at North

THE mountain freak is at the north end of the range. At the south end is another freak of a different type. In 1881 a cowboy was galloping along when his hat was blown off with a gust of wind. He replaced it, but the same fate awaited him. Then he looked about him and discovered that the air current shot forth from the entrance or opening of a cave. Subsequently it was named Wind Cave and made a national monument. It contains a thousand rooms. A hundred miles of passages have been explored. The phenomenon has eight separate tiers or stories. The fact that it both exhales and inhales through the entrance makes it strangely human; and scientists have never been able to offer an adequate explanation; though they think it may have been a geyser long ago.

Still farther south lies Cascade Springs on an old stage road. There are seven of these mineral springs of which the largest, Big Geyser, carries on at the rate of sixty barrels of water each minute. The streams all converge and then flow on into the Cheyenne River.

A hundred thermal springs are grouped in and about the health-giving city of Hot Springs. Persons that have tried the waters of Europe come to this wonderful spot to renew their youth. The citizens aver that the mineral medicine of the water together with the magic of the ideal climate will make a sick man well and a well man "weller." The patients are required to take six glasses of water each day, also plentiful exercise between the glasses. If one is cynically inclined, he may point out that the exercise alone is beneficial; yet both the state and the nation have homes for soldiers there. The springs are of the same temperature as the human body. They flow to the astonishing extent of a million gallons daily.

Though the city of Custer is fringed about by forest preserves, it possesses a White House. This particular White House, however, serves mankind as a